

THE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
Medical Officer of Health  
TO THE  
**PENZANCE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
FOR THE YEAR 1896.



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GENTLEMEN,

**Introductory.**

I beg to present my first Annual Report. The change in the office I represent, due to the lamented death of my predecessor on September 17th, necessarily renders it imperfect in many particulars; but the fortunate circumstance of the material for the former part of the year having been handed on to me in good order permits of my adding to my account of the short period covered by my services (since November 3rd) useful comments and statistics based on a consideration of the events of the entire year.

**Inspection of the District. House Accommodation  
and Repairs.**

The short time elapsing since my election has allowed of but a very partial inspection of the Borough. My attention has been in the main directed to the poorer districts. It cannot be denied that the cottage accommodation, if sufficient in quantity, is here and there sadly deficient in quality—many of the old tenements tending to fall more and more into disrepair. I would therefore desire to give my assent to a note which I find in the Sanitary Inspector's "preliminary form" for the year, that cottages of a rental below £10 are greatly needed in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile it is satisfactory to remark that 24 new cottages have been, during 1896, erected in the Town, and that 19 old tenements have been repaired on the demand of your Authority. Three cases of overcrowding were dealt with during the year.

**Common Lodging-houses.**

There are two common lodging-houses in the Borough. One is registered, inspected, and well kept. The other I found on visiting in a dirty condition, and needing sanitary improvement prior to registration.

**Drainage.**

The new sewer at Penrose and Trewartha Terraces, replacing the old defective one, has removed from that locality a perpetual source of danger to the inhabitants, and the advantage to the public health is cheaply purchased, even at the considerable outlay your Authority was compelled to bear. You are to be congratulated, too, on having resolutely set your face against the proposed erection over a sewer in another part of the town.



### **Water-Supply.**

The question of an increased water-supply to the Town is rightly engaging your attention, and a promising scheme is at present well in hand. The new well at Boscathnoe has already more than justified the anticipations of its pioneer supporters by its great usefulness in recent times of drought; and you may justly look to works of a like character to give you the additional pure water-supply you need. In your consideration of this question I trust you may never be led to give your consent to the introduction into our supply of water from a tainted stream. Our present supply is ample for the greater part of the year, and may be, without doubt, supplemented from a pure source to cope with the exigencies of prolonged drought. An annual cleansing of the reservoirs suffices to keep it of constantly good quality, For the rest, the pumping of good water, while not necessarily more costly than the filtration of an indifferent stream, frees us from the dangers that periodically attend the latter method in use. 55 new dwelling-houses were supplied with water during the year.

### **Public Urinals, Closets, &c.**

I gather that no complaint has arisen during the year as to the condition of our public urinals, or of the School or Railway Station closet arrangements. The urinal below the Davy statue is certainly not well placed, being rather dark, and not admitting of free upward ventilation. I defer comments on these structures generally until I have become better acquainted by further visitations.

### **Scavenging.**

The scavenging of the Town is in the main efficiently managed by your Authority, and the excellent dust-carts employed allow of the regular removal of house-refuse without pollution of the air of the streets or of the throats of the passers-by.

### **Bake-houses, Slaughter-houses, Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk-shops.**

There are in the Borough 19 bake-houses, 18 slaughter-houses, 34 milk-shops, and six cowsheds. All are registered, and have been visited from time to time throughout the year by the Sanitary Inspector, who reports no defects.

### **Vaccination.**

In the Union district Vaccination does not appear to be strictly enforced. In my opinion calf lymph of ascertained purity should be regularly supplied to Public Vaccinators, and in times of epidemic to Medical Officers of Health on application; while the modern needle method of its use should be countenanced. The old hit-or-miss four-scar method is distinctly unscientific and barbarous.

### **Seizure of Food and "Sale of Food and Drugs" Act.**

The carcase of a pig was seized and condemned when exposed for sale in the market. A Public Analyst to the Borough has just been appointed, and I would recommend an occasional analysis of milk.





### Interim Reports during the Year.

During the year fortnightly reports dealing with nuisances, sickness, and deaths, defects in dwelling-houses, water-fittings, closet-apparatuses, &c. (the outcome of constant and regular inspection), have been supplied to your Authority by your Medical Officer of Health, Sanitary Inspector, and Plumber; and the customary monthly reports have been furnished to the Cornwall County Council Sanitary Committee on forms supplied by them. As I am informed, no special report has been called for by the Local Government Board.

### Tables A and B—Vital Statistics.

I now invite your attention to the enclosed tables, showing the incidence of births, diseases, and deaths in 1896. Here it will be seen that with a reasonable birth-rate satisfactory death-rates have obtained. It should be remarked of all these rates, based as they are on the census return of 1891, firstly, that that return, in the opinion of my predecessor and other competent authorities, appears to appreciably underestimate our actual population at the time; secondly, that the usual method of estimating for the mid-census population of 1896 leaves out of account the unusual rapidity of growth evident in the Town during the last five years. The general death-rate, too, needs further correction by making allowance for a number of invalids who come among us often at too late a period to benefit by our climatic treatment. It is too much the fashion to prefer Continental health-resorts for the insidious beginnings of disease, and to reserve our West of England health-resorts for the later, often, by that time, irremediable stages. “Unfit to travel abroad. Send him nearer home” is the “cue” to the representation of the last scene of all.

Bearing in mind these influences which tend to unnaturally heighten our rates, we come to a consideration of the rates themselves, as based on the '91 census returns. These are—birth-rate, 25·94 per 1000; zymotic death-rate, 1·04 per 1000; and general death-rate, 16·87 per 1000. Correcting the latter for 1896, and subtracting the deaths of recent newcomers, the general death-rate is reduced to 15·72. The infantile mortality, or deaths under one year old, per 1000 births is 151·7. All the death-rates are appreciably lower than those of the preceding year.

Analysing the deaths according to age, we find that no less than one-third of their number (69 out of the total of 210) took place at or above the age of 65 years. Of these 34 were between 70 and 80 years of age, 18 between 80 and 90, one 92, one 93, and one 94 years of age. Deaths from respiratory diseases were few (23), as also deaths from Phthisis (seven of residents, seven of newcomers—total 14).

### Zymotic Diseases.

A great many cases of Measles (184) and of Scarlatina (48) were notified during the year. The mildness of these cases is shown by the fact that no deaths from Measles occurred, and but three from Scarlatina; these latter representing indeed the entire mortality from all notifiable diseases. Two cases of Scarlatina





were during the year removed to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, where each remained for a period of seven weeks. Both were of the mildest character, and were in due course discharged convalescent. Seven cases of Erysipelas, six of Diphtheria, and five of Typhoid Fever were notified. As stated above, no deaths occurred from either. These complete the list of notifiable diseases throughout the year. Five deaths were attributed to Whooping Cough, five to Diarrhœa, and one to Influenza. This exhausts the year's list of zymotic disorders.

### **Measures taken.**

The method of dealing with Infectious cases, in addition to removal to Hospital, has included visitations by your Sanitary Officers, the issue of cautionary notices and of verbal advice, exclusion from schools of children of infected households, and such after-cleansing and disinfection as have been necessary. The disinfectants supplied have been Perchloride of Mercury Solution (one in 1000), Sanitas, Jeye's Fluid and Powder, Carbolic, Condyl, Lime, Sulphur Fumigation, and the Dry-heat Chamber.

### **Hospital Accommodation.**

The Hospital at present in use is improperly situated (being too near to dwelling-houses), is too small for possible needs in emergency, and is—by reason of the close attachment of the rooms—unfitted for the treatment of more than one kind of infectious disease at a time. Our Tent, when erected on the new Hospital Ground outside the Borough, has proved a most valuable supplement in time of need; but the possibility of its use must be at all times dependent upon the weather. The plans of your proposed new Infectious Diseases Hospital show proper provision in an admirable situation for the reasonable needs of the Town and neighbourhood, and it is to be hoped that their exact form will be speedily settled to the satisfaction of yourselves and of the Local Government Board, and that the buildings will be completed without delay. The proposed erection on the same premises of a Steam Disinfecter will provide a necessary addition to the sanitary equipment of the Borough.

### **Comparison with previous Years.**

Looking through the Annual Reports of your late Medical Officer of Health from 1880 onwards, I find that the birth-rate for 1896 is among the higher and the death-rate among the lower recorded. Indeed, there is only one death-rate recorded lower than the corrected death-rate for 1896. I have not succeeded in finding records of the zymotic death-rate, or of the infantile mortality, prior to 1895. Here the corresponding rates for 1895 and 1896 are (1895) zymotic death-rate, 2·2; ditto (1896), 1·04; infantile mortality (deaths under one year old per 1000 births) (1895), 237·5; ditto (1896), 151·7. The improvement in the latter rate during 1896 is very marked. I gather, too, from the records of previous years that the list for 1896 of deaths from pulmonary diseases is exceptionally light.



**Conclusion.**

The Climatological Report appended shows the favouring conditions amid which the year has passed. The equability of the temperature, with its general high run and complete absence of extremes, the large amount of average daily sunshine, the comparatively small rainfall, have together determined a year even more than ordinarily favourable to our residents and invalid visitors of all ages.

I am, Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

RICHARD DAVEY BOASE,

*M.O.H. Penzance Urban Sanitary District.*

5, MORRAB ROAD,

PENZANCE,

*January 14th, 1897.*

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*APPENDIX.*

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CLIMATOLOGICAL RECORD FOR 1896

*(Under the supervision of the Royal Meteorological Society).*

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MONTHLY MEAN TEMPERATURES.

(Jan.) 46°·46	...	(Feb.) 46°·73	...	(Mar.) 50°
(Apr.) 52°·77	...	(May) 57°·83	...	(June) 61°·21
(July) 62°·68	...	(Aug.) 61°·34	...	(Sept.) 59°·18
(Oct.) 49°·93	...	(Nov.) 45°·47	...	(Dec.) 45°·94

Winter mean range ... .. 4°·53.

Average daily sunshine ... 5 hrs. 0 mins. 16½ secs.

Rainfall during year ... .. 31·87 inches.

On two occasions only the temperature fell below freezing point, 31° in December being the lowest temperature recorded.

C. H. BENN,

*Borough Meteorologist.*

